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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

FINALISTS 2009

WEDNESDAY JULY 15th

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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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Welcome to your special guide to the 2009 Develop Awards.

Now in their seventh year, the Develop Industry Excellence Awards are still the only event of their kind, rewarding the work done by games development studios, technology and service companies from across Europe in the past 12 months.

I think you'll agree, once you've flicked through the following 12 pages, that the Develop Awards are also the most forward-thinking. No area of games development has gone unacknowledged by the shortlist, with not just console and PC games developers here, but also iPhone, Facebook and Flash game experts being celebrated.

They are also the only awards that acknowledge the things that matter most in games development – quality, talent, creativity and business smarts. Hype, marketing and PR are not important to us when it comes to choosing the finalists, and publishers haven't paid to be considered. All the teams, companies and games listed have got here on their own merits.

"The Develop Awards are the most forward-thinking event of their kind..."

And of that shortlist, this year's finalists again represent and recognise the vibrant variety of talent and creativity on show at studios across Europe.

There are over 70 studios in the running for our 18 awards, with teams of all different sizes hailing from the UK, France, Finland, Sweden, Germany and the USA. We've got a generous share of smaller teams, even one or two 'micro studios', plus the traditional larger teams that make up both independent and in-house studios.

In all, it's adding up to yet another great night for games developers across Europe.

Good luck to all the companies listed across the following pages – and we look forward to seeing you on Wednesday July 15th.

Michael French
Editor-in-Chief, Develop

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CREATIVITY

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BEST NEW IP

LittleBigPlanet *(Media Molecule)*
Media Molecule's eccentric platformer courted the kind of pre-release attention typically reserved for a long-standing elite studio. Despite a foundation in one of gaming's most traditional genres, an already-iconic lead character, smart design and an innovative toolset meant *LittleBigPlanet* wowed on every level.

Mirror's Edge *(EA DICE)*
Sterility is rarely something worthy of praise, but in the case of *Mirror's Edge* the crisp white utopia that DICE conceived offered one of the year's most striking in-game landscapes. In creating an eye-catching heroine and unconventional gameplay *Mirror's Edge* remains one of 2008's most original games.

PURE *(Black Rock Studio)*
A brilliantly conceived racing title, *Pure* is both technically superb and exceptionally fun, and stands out as one of the best automotive games of the last 12 months. Demonstrating that you don't need a licence or established brand to deliver quality, the game proves that Black Rock Studio is one of the UK's most talented teams.

Zen Bound *(Secret Exit)*
Despite being the subject of numerous cheap fetish gags, Secret Exit's rope binding puzzle game showcases just how attractive and detailed simple concepts can be when realised on the iPhone. Subsequently, *Zen Bound* has become a champion of the new mobile gaming movement.

You're In The Movies *(Zoë Mode)*
Proving the Xbox 360's worth as a home for quality casual gaming, *You're In The Movies* offered players a chance to toy with the kind of special effects made famous by Hollywood. Turning consumers' living rooms into blue-screen studios is a marvellous feat, and one Zoë Mode should be proud of.

Burn Zombie Burn *(Doublesix)*
Showcasing the potential of new IP on download services with a slick shooter, Guildford's Doublesix created a unique PSN experience worthy of the critical acclaim it garnered at launch. Adorning classic coin-op gameplay with clichés of classic horror cinema, *Burn Zombie Burn* is one of 2009's most enjoyable download titles.

BEST USE OF A LICENCE OR IP

Lego Batman *(Traveller's Tales)*
Demonstrating a natural affinity with *Batman*'s broad universe and brand, Traveller's Tales carefully re-created the world of Gotham City's infamous Dark Knight in Lego bricks to great effect. Taking influence from the *Batman* comics, televised and celluloid incarnations, the studio crafted a truly irresistible game world.

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena *(Starbreeze Studios)*
Starbreeze used 2009 to prove that the clichés about licensed products don't necessarily hold water, and made a high quality game that ably captured the world of the *Riddick* films and games. Thanks to *Dark Athena*'s technical flair and narrative strength, the game remains a licence well regarded across the industry.

Outrun Online Arcade *(Sumo Digital)*
Sumo Digital continues to excel at reviving classic Sega licences, and its recent treatment of the beloved *OutRun* series is one of its greatest achievements. Capturing the magic of the *OutRun 2 SP* arcade machine in an Xbox Live game is no mean feat, but one Sumo Digital completed with elegance.

Beijing 2008: The Official Videogame of the Olympic Games *(Eurocom)*
Games based on the Olympic Games are rarely regarded for their accomplished design, but Eurocom was clearly happy to buck that trend. *Beijing 2008: The Official Videogame of the Olympic Games* is playable, well realised and – most importantly for licensed product – captures the atmosphere and look of an Olympic event.

House of the Dead: Overkill *(Headstrong Games)*
As much an homage to low-budget horror films as to the *House of the Dead* arcade series, *Overkill* did an irreverent job of reinventing the light gun game for Wii. Along with unreserved use of foul language, playing to the Wii's strengths means Headstrong's effort will be long remembered.

Hasbro Family Game Night *(EA Bright Light)*
Despite the flack that mini-game compendiums can face, EA Bright Light's collection of classic board games made thorough use of the licence's key assets, and the result was a title with a healthy presence in the sales charts. It has even proven flexible enough to turn into its own dedicated Xbox Live channel.

CREATIVITY

VISUAL ARTS

LittleBigPlanet *(Media Molecule)*
While many credit the irresistible appeal of Sackboy with *LittleBigPlanet*'s popularity with its PR, it is the game's overall appearance that should enjoy much of the praise bestowed upon Media Molecule's visually eclectic IP. Wildly varied and constantly surprising, few could refute *LittleBigPlanet*'s good looks.

Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars *(Rockstar Leeds)*
The fact that Rockstar Leeds managed to fit a huge 3D sandbox game onto the DS is impressive enough, but what is truly remarkable is that the game is so stylish to behold. Like its console brethren, *Chinatown Wars* captures the look and atmosphere of a thriving city with aplomb.

Killzone 2 *(Guerrilla)*
Killzone 2 is the game that gave the public lexicon the term 'deferred rendering', but that is just one of this stunning looking game's visual accomplishments. It stands as one of the most technically impressive games of the current generation, and proves how talented the team at Sony's Amsterdam studio Guerrilla is.

PlayStation Home *(London Studio)*
While some berated PlayStation Home's sleek look, as an interactive social space for communication and events it offers a clear, well-designed area that ably juggles form and function. As Home welcomes the likes ARGs and a steady stream of new users, it provides a sharp, tidy hangout for the PS3 community.

Xbox 360 Avatars *(Rare)*
Rare is seldom credited for its work on the Avatars for the new Xbox 360 Experience, but these quirky yet distinct characters have quickly helped define the look of the 360 player community. The system provides memorable and stylistic, but user-driven options that are both very flexible, but also very Rare.

Pure *(Black Rock Studio)*
Black Rock's focus on racing titles is clearly justified by *Pure*. The sweeping vistas and mountain ranges that make up the majority of the backdrops in the game are among some of the best seen in the current generation of consoles, and offer gamers a blissfully attractive world to escape into.

AUDIO ACCOMPLISHMENT

Fable II *(Lionhead)*
Fable II is certainly a box-ticker when it comes to audio, from the sweeping orchestral score to rival cinema, through to a well-written script brought to life with good voice acting in an industry still shackled to the cringe-worthy dub.

Mirror's Edge *(EA DICE)*
EA DICE crafted an audio backdrop perfectly paced to match the distinct tempo and drama of the gameplay. Atop the stark white rooftops on which the game is set, it is the game's audio that adds the grit to proceedings. Its title track was even used for the basis of a pop song, available on iTunes.

GTA: The Lost and the Damned *(Rockstar North)*
The *Grand Theft Auto* series is no stranger to praise for its efforts with audio, and *The Lost and the Damned* expansion is no exception. Boasting voice acting that rivals the best of the series, Rockstar has evidently treated its first foray into downloadable content as a fully priced product.

Empire: Total War *(Creative Assembly)*
Along with the allure of the dynamic oceans in *Empire: Total War*, the in-game audio is something quite special, bringing to life epic battles with a rich and dramatic soundscape. Quite apart from the effects themselves, a sweeping score is one of the highlights of the recent PC game release.

House of the Dead: Overkill *(Headstrong Games)*
Along with enough four letter words to rival *Goodfellas*, *Overkill* features a witty pastiche of the kind of voice acting made famous by light gun games, and a sharp script that walks a very knowing line between the awful and inspired. This game alone proves that games can be laugh-out-loud funny and it's audio that can help deliver parody and comedy.

You're In The Movies *(Zoë Mode)*
Microsoft's tribute to the B-movie not only perfectly captured the sound of pulp cinema, but let players dub their creations with their voices, adding a unique interactive audio element to a game that crammed Hollywood into the player's living room.

PUBLISHING HERO

Apple
Having changed the entire ecosystem of the music industry with the iPod, when Apple turned its attention to video games the impact should have been inevitable. The iPhone's publishing model has made some developers rich overnight, saved the mobile market, revived the bedroom coder and reinvigorated creativity in game design. All in less than a year on the market.

Sega
The last year has seen Sega continue to gain momentum and success as a publisher. It is still a champion of new IP through the likes of *MadWorld* and engages numerous UK teams to 'remix' its established brands. Sega has proved that a back catalogue which courts cult status need not be a burden.

Direct2Drive
As IGN Entertainment's digital distribution store, Direct2Drive has quickly established itself as a leading force in bringing high profile games to the public via download. The firm is as keen to work with the big boys as it is provide a route to market for indie developers.

Codemasters
Codemasters has used the past twelve months to continue to expand and innovate, while at the same time signing UK development talent. From acquiring Swordfish to moving on the Russian market and signing a distribution deal with Black Bean Games, Codemasters has shown there's still space for Britsoft publishers – especially ones that engage local talent.

ngmoco
Founded in 2008 in San Francisco, ngmoco focuses purely on iPhone titles, leaping into the spotlight with UK-made *Rolando*. All of its games are made by external developers – a clutch of them European – under the exec team's guidance; it is, surprisingly, the publisher-developer relationship turned good.

Valve
Currently publishing 80 per cent of PC online action games, Valve and its Steam and Steamworks services are clearly a force to be reckoned with. The studio's digital distribution, digital rights management and multiplayer and community platform have become invaluable to a huge range of developers and publishers.

Good luck to all finalists

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TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES

TECHNICAL INNOVATION

LittleBigPlanet *(Media Molecule)*
Media Molecule's attitude to enabling users to creatively express themselves and share experiences is what's made *LBP* stand out. What's easy to underestimate is the significant technical achievement behind enabling this: the online level-sharing, four-player co-op, plus designing and implementing an intuitive level editor without modelling tools.

Killzone 2 *(Guerrilla)*
Okay, so that 'target render' movie may have mislead some, but the graphical achievements – and the technology underpinning them – are still some of the most impressive around. Guerrilla has been presenting its deferred rendering techniques at conferences for years; now the fruits of their labour are open for all to see.

GTA: Chinatown Wars *(Rockstar Leeds)*
That Rockstar Leeds managed to cram a fully-fledged *GTA* experience – including all manner of new things – into Nintendo's dinky DS is a phenomenal achievement. The seamless, fully-populated world of Liberty City is just as buzzing as its console counterparts, despite the tiny amount of RAM and processing power available.

Fable II *(Lionhead)*
Its volumetric lighting effects are probably the first thing that stand out about *Fable II*, but there's an awful lot going on under the hood. From the dog AI, fully-modelled global economy to the interaction with the Xbox Live Arcade *Fable Pub Games*, *Fable II* pushes as many boundaries technically as it does in terms of gameplay mechanics.

PlayStation Home *(London Studio)*
It's the first virtual world available on consoles, and London Studio's long slog on the project shows just the amount of work involved in connecting a whole console's community together. They've also provided a fully-fledged development kit to let other developers market their games and even monetise efforts in this new social, virtual world.

Football Manager Live *(Sports Interactive)*
It's not the world's first MMO, sure, but turning the worryingly addictive single-player nature of *Football Manager* to a massively-multiplayer audience is not a small undertaking, and yet has been seemingly achieved with ease by a tiny team by today's standards.

BEST TOOLS PROVIDER

Autodesk
With its purchase of Softimage, Autodesk now owns almost every major 3D creation package under the sun. But it's not resting on its laurels: the company's moves into middleware are starting to take shape with a strong GDC showing, and it continues to work with the industry on easing those next-gen pains.

Havok
Not content with releasing two new products last year – Havok Destruction and Havok Cloth, which has already seen its first shipped title – Havok has now entered the AI market, looking to clean up where they feel other companies have left a gap. But it's for physics that we'll always love them.

Perforce
The big daddy in project management – or 'software configuration management' as they like to term it – Perforce counts a huge number of the biggest publishers and developers amongst its clients, all of whom would be lost without its tools.

Scaleform
Its GFx middleware enables artists to create and deploy user interfaces through Flash, giving them a much more visual and intuitive way of making gorgeous looking GUIs than cobbled together in-house tools. It certainly impressed Black Rock and Lionhead enough for them to become customers, anyway.

Audiokinetic
While a few years ago it might have been all FMOD, FMOD, FMOD, Audiokinetic's Wwise has seen significant growth within the last few years with its editor-centric focus. The firm has also launched the first in its range of dynamic sound synthesizers, which it's worked on with Realtime Worlds.

Hansoft
Still managing to grow its userbase at a rapid rate, Hansoft's work on helping developers to be better organised continues to find a rabid audience. Its focus on agile development typifies the forward-thinking nature of the company.

Quazal
Quebec-based Quazal has three flagship products: Net-Z, its 'distributed game state engine' for online gaming; Rendez-vous for lobby and community features; and the pre-built skinnable Lobby solution Spark! But it also works with developers to create hosting and server structures for things like persistent stat tracking and content sharing.

BEST ENGINE

Unreal Engine 3 *(Epic Games)*
Its almost ubiquitous adoption isn't much of a surprise when Epic has test cases like *Gears of War*. Now over its PS3 growing pains, UE3 represents one of the most mature toolsets around, and its usage in titles as diverse as Team 17's *Leisure Suit Larry* proves that it's not just suited to homoerotic shooters.

Gamebryo *(Emergent Game Technologies)*
Forever growing in popularity, especially after games like *Fallout 3* and *Warhammer Online*, Emergent's enterprise-centric approach to the tech – building it like an enterprise application, and supporting it accordingly – is proving a winner. The genre agnosticism doesn't hurt either.

BlitzTech *(Blitz Games Studios)*
Ten years in the making, Blitz has finally made its technology available to third-parties – and has already racked up a success with Headstrong's *House of the Dead Overkill*. It's also the first engine to explore the new frontier of stereoscopic 3D on current-gen consoles.

Unity *(Unity Technologies)*
Rapidly breaking free from its indie and hobbyist stereotype, Unity is now being used at high end studios like Funcom and EA. The in-browser support has been coupled with new MMO functionality to provide an increasingly popular tool.

Vision Engine *(Trinigy)*
Trinigy has continued to strive for more mass-market acceptance, now powering the next in the epic *Gothic* series by Piranha Bytes. It's also recently put in place some tech that it says will keep it in good stead for the next generation.

PhyreEngine *(SCEE R&D)*
Sony's PS3 engine is not only high-level, not only cross-platform, but also completely and utterly free. And the team is constantly working with users to optimise, help with problems and develop new features with releases every three months. Lenient licensing means users don't even have to credit their usage.

Best of luck to all the

dev

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TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES

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BEST RECRUITMENT COMPANY

Specialmove
Only three years old, Specialmove has already carved itself a reputation in the industry, with a client list of over 50 companies including Rockstar, Sega, Codemasters, Realtime Worlds, Activision, Midway, Kuju and Media Molecule. It is also strongly against CV spam, only sending them if the applicant is interested and meets the relevant criteria.

Datascope
Continuing its close work with SCEE, Datascope has had another successful year. Its work with current client Bizarre has impressed so much that the agency has been signed up to work globally for Activision. It's a boost to the firm's already significant international operations, which cover countries such as Australia, Italy, Germany and Sweden among others.

OPM
Established and profitable for 11 years, OPM has continued to provide a highly competitive recruitment offering. Now boasting over 14,500 potential employees and 900 employers on its database, OPM innovates with new facilities like its Skype interview service. Last year also saw OPM move to new, larger premises.

Aardvark Swift
Renowned amongst its clients as a purveyor of the personal touch, Aardvark Swift says it is highly regarded across the industry due to its ability to combine professionalism with a friendly tone. The recruiter has secured preferred supplier agreements with a number of leading games companies, and some of its clients use Aardvark Swift exclusively.

Amiqus
An impressive client roster pretty much argues the case for why Amiqus makes it onto the short list this year. Bizarre Creations, Rockstar, Media Molecule, Splash Damage, Rocksteady, Lionhead, Microsoft Game Studios, Black Rock, Quantic Dream, Gusto – the list goes on. The firm prides itself on providing a comprehensive range of solutions for publishers and developers large and small.

Natural Selection
Natural Selection has been making a name for itself by offering consultative searches for senior and specialist positions in the games industry. The firm has offices in both the UK and North America and intentionally keeps a low profile in a bid to stay focused on finding the right staff for its clients.

CREATIVE OUTSOURCING

High Score Productions
According to the High Score folks, last year was easily the best in its five year history. Given that it worked on 27 projects – some as big as the 70,000 word voiceover for an upcoming Eidos title – it's not much of a surprise.

Axis Animation
Glasgow-based Axis is one of the fastest growing animation studios, spending the past year building a client base outside the UK, including Bioware and Bethesda. On our shores they've made trailers and promos for Codemasters and Guerrilla.

Outsource Media UK
Having refurbished its London studio this year, the team has worked on 40 titles in the last 12 months, with 85 per cent of that being for overseas clients in Europe, Asia and the US, most recently working on Telltale's *Wallace and Gromit* series.

Side / Sidelines
2008 saw one of Side's biggest projects yet – 38 hours of voice direction and recording for Lionhead's epic *Fable II*, which was critically praised. It also worked on *Tomb Raider*, while its writing arm Sidelines wrote Stephen Fry's dialogue for *LittleBigPlanet*.

Richard Jacques
With 2008 its most profitable and busiest year so far, Richard Jacques Studios continues to go from strength to strength. The firm worked on *Sonic Chronicles* for Bioware, *Virtua Tennis '09*, *You're in the Movies* and *Sonic and the Black Knight*, as well as providing continued consultancy on *SingStar*.

Nimrod
2008 saw the launch of Nimrod's new voice recording and localisation wing, Mana Sound, which worked on Nintendo's smash *Wii Fit*. They've also been working on *Far Cry 2*, *Killzone 2*, *Dead to Rights* and *Battlefield Heroes*, as well as a project for the OneBigGame charity.

Pitstop Productions
This past year was Pitstop's best so far, having written the critically acclaimed (and Guiness World Record holding) script for *House of the Dead Overkill*, as well as composing the whole game's grindhouse soundtrack. It's also been doing work on Team 17's *Alien Breed* reboot, as well as other projects.

SERVICES

Testology
A new QA and outsourcing company helmed by Lionhead alum Andy Robson, Testology had a great 2008, having worked on *Fable II* and *LittleBigPlanet*. It also adapted processes to keep working with Media Molecule in in testing DLC.

Babel
Babel continues to expand its world-spanning outsourcing empire, having signed deals with translation partners in Japan as well as agreements with voiceover specialists and MMO management companies.

Universally Speaking
It's been another big year for US, having localised titles such as *LittleBigPlanet* and *Killzone 2*, as well as extra work from clients such as Capcom, Square Enix, EA and Sega. The firm also opened its Japanese office, in the heart of Tokyo.

Partnertrans
Partnertrans works on the whole gamut of releases, from mobile titles like *High School Musical* to big MMOs like *Lord of the Rings Online*. It's also started an effort to get the industry more 'localisation aware', running workshops at conferences and lobbying for localisation-specific awards.

Testronic Labs
Testronic offers the full range of services, from compliance and compatability testing to localisation and functionality testing, and has just added localisation to its bag of tricks. It's also expanded to Japan and the US in the past year.

Audiomotion
The list of titles that mocap house Audiomotion has worked on this year is all we really need to say: *Guitar Hero*, *Killzone 2*, *Harry Potter*, *Wanted*, *Bionic Commando*, *Terminator: Salvation*, *Pro Evolution Soccer* and *FIFA*. No wonder they're the largest Vicon studio outside of North America.

Centroid
Busy as ever, Centroid has this year worked with Realtime Worlds on *APB*, CCP's *Eve Online* and a wide range of Traveller's Tales games, in addition to unannounced titles. Its Pinewood Studio base gives it a good view on the media/games crossover.

OUTSOURCING FOR GAMES

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BEST NEW STUDIO

Media Molecule
What a debut. This small Guildford team was founded in 2006 – and just months after opening scored a deal with Sony for *LittleBigPlanet*. It's an astonishing first step and sets the studio up well for whatever it chooses to do next.

nDreams
nDreams has grown from a one-person studio into a team of 20, relying on a mix of in-house, contract and outsourced staff. It's first project was *Xi*, an alternate reality game for PlayStation Home, while its 'Brand' division has scored work with Orange, NatWest and Reebok. It is working on new Home projects and ideas for Wii, PC, iPhone and Android.

Hand Circus
A 'micro studio', HandCircus shot to fame last year as the developer of *Rolando* for the iPhone/iPod Touch. Specifically dedicated to 'creating fun, engaging, and above all very playful experiences', its achievements are all the more impressive when you remember it has just one staff member: Croydon-based Simon Oliver.

Proper Games
Scottish studio Proper Games launched its first title, *Flock!* in April 2009. Focused on new IP downloadable titles, the studio claims to make games that are 'a joy to play, and fun to make, on time and within budget'. The team says it wants to focus on turning fun, unique ideas into easily accessible games for both established and emerging markets.

Playfish
Having been in business for just under two years, it was in the last 12 months that the social networking gaming business proved itself as its titles – including *Bowling Buddies*, *Pet Society*, *Who Has The Biggest Brain?* and *Word Challenge* – finally whipped Facebook players into a frenzy. The firm is headquartered in London with offices in San Francisco, Beijing and Tromsø.

Crytek Budapest
Crytek's Hungarian Studio opened its doors in 2007 and was the third European studio opened by Crytek on the continent. *Crysis Warhead* was its debut release, and surpassed the original title's benchmark quality visuals and gameplay – the game was built on a new, enhanced and optimised version of Crytek's CryENGINE 2 technology.

BEST HANDHELD GAMES STUDIO

Rockstar Leeds
You'd be forgiven for thinking that Rockstar Leeds could just take it easy. After being the saving grace of the PSP with its two *GTA Stories* titles, why innovate any further? But *GTA: Chinatown Wars* shows consummate understanding of what is expected and needed of a handheld game. According to Metacritic, it's the best-rated game on the DS platform, beating even Nintendo's titles.

Exient
One of the most prolific handheld developers in Europe – and a highly rated one at that. Repeatedly entrusted with the handheld interpretation of some of EA's biggest franchises, this Oxford-based studio released five DS titles last year, three of which (*Skate It*, *FIFA 2009* and *Tiger Woods PGA 2009*) scored over 70 per cent on Metacritic. To top it all, it has sold millions of units – arguably making it not just one of the most prolific teams, but one of the most profitable.

Curve
In the past 18 months London-based Curve has developed well-received PSP versions of *Buzz*, a key Sony flagship social games franchise (and once-upon-a-time Develop Award winner for new IP). Proving its abilities in reinterpreting a brand for a new platform, *Buzz: Master Quiz* won plaudits from critics for its multiplayer modes and a space at the top of the PSP chart.

Traveller's Tales Fusion
Once upon a time, the words Traveller's Tales and handheld games were a match made in hell. But since buying Embryonic that's all changed: the unit, now called Fusion, has produced in the last year two widely praised but distinct spin-offs of 'big brother' console titles *LEGO Batman* and *LEGO Indiana Jones*.

Secret Exit
Formed in 2006, Finnish Secret Exit has been one of the standout succeses on iPhone with its *Spin* and *Zen Bound* IPs. As with other developers for the format, it has started small – founded by just two people – and has stayed that way, marrying small-scale development smarts with the large-scale success of Apple's gaming formats.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Revolution
Viva! In the past 12 months Revolution flexed the muscle of its *Broken Sword* IP; DS and Wii versions, produced by freelance and development partners, arrived earlier this year. Next stop: self-publishing on other formats. And it goes full circle – Charles Cecil is working with Radar Pictures to develop it into a movie.

Gimme5Games
Although acquired by Eidos in 2007, Gimme5Games went independent in February. Already, it has carved a place for itself as an independent, offering a social casual platform publishing and developing innovative titles that include user-generated content functions, plus virtual currency offers. Not bad for five months' work.

Monumental
Nottingham HQ'd Monumental has grown its business on multiple fronts. First has been the careful expansion to three sites, including new studios in Manchester and Pune, India. Meanwhile, it has grown its reputation, winning a deal with Capcom and licensing deals for its internal tech, and pursuing alternative funding routes, raising over £500,000 from grants and development agency funds.

Playfish
Yes, Playfish has had rapid success as a social network games developer – titles including *Bowling Buddies* and *Word Challenge* are big Facebook hits. But this business is a canny one. It launched the first iPhone app with Facebook Connect functions and also raised $17m in funding last year.

Crytek
In its ten years of business, Crytek has evolved considerably from a single studio team to a business spanning six sites. Also in that time it has licensed out its own technology into a successful middleware business, and in recent months has shown it knows a good bargain when it sees one: it rescued a chunk of Free Radical staff when it bought the dying studio earlier this year.

Blitz Games Studios
This is one of Britain's oldest studios, but it's not showing its age – if anything it's getting more agile. After already scooping one Develop Award for business development two years ago after a successful restructure, this year the firm put its money where its mouth is, and turned into a middleware provider; its BlitzTech engine powered Headstrong's *House of the Dead: Overkill*.

BEST INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER

Media Molecule
A true testament to British independent development, Media Molecule's first game *LittleBigPlanet* has been the agenda-setting game not just for areas like user-generated content and flawless design, but for a whole games platform. Constantly ticking over with DLC and other new content, the team has created a game that isn't just a game – it's a business model in its own right.

Sumo Digital
This Foundation 9-owned studio is never seemingly out of work or without a key project to look after. Sumo Digital employs some 100 staff at its HQ in Sheffield – and while some might be tempted to write it off as 'best friend of Sega', its perfect handling of key IPs like *Virtua Tennis* and *OutRun* show it is more than just fanboy fodder. The studio's partners can only ever sing its praises, and its games consistently hit the charts.

Crytek
Crytek was founded in 1999 in Germany and is today one of the world's most respected European teams. It has its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and additional studios in Kiev (Ukraine), Budapest (Hungary), Sofia (Bulgaria), Seoul (South Korea) and Nottingham (UK). It's dedicated to creating triple-A video games for the PC and next-generation consoles, powered by their proprietary game technology CryENGINE.

Asobo Studio
Seven years since its founding, Bordeaux-based Asobo finally proved itself to be just as capable as a work-for-hire outfit as a creator of new IP. It produced two Pixar film adaptations in *Wall-E* and *Up*, while at the same time developing its racing title *Fuel* for Codemasters. The studio now has 70 staff and the capacity to work on up to three different projects simultaneously.

Starbreeze Studio
Starbreeze certainly cemented its place in the major league of game studios in Europe during the last year. As well as producing its second *Riddick*-inspired action game for consoles, it also scored a key deal with EA Partners to work on one of the publisher's IPs. At the same time, it prides itself on being a key player in the Swedish games development scene; it has grown by 50 per cent each year, while at the same time claiming it has a great working environment for staff plus strong relations with key publishing partners.

Jagex
Sure, when it comes to MMOs it's sexier to talk up the successes of teams like Blizzard and its *World of Warcraft*, but this British independent proves our studios can compete on a global basis – and reach new audiences. Flagship title *RuneScape* continues to court the lucrative teenage fanbase while casual portal FunOrb keeps growing. Certainly, it's got the significant annual turnover – and a busy studio of over 400 staff – to prove the formula works. All eyes are now on its next product, futuristic MMO *MechScape*.

BEST IN-HOUSE TEAM

Lionhead
Peter Molyneux's Guildford studio was always a jewel in the crown for Microsoft Game Studios – but *Fable II*'s selling millions of units proved the investment two years ago was worth it. The game, a significant open world RPG backed by plenty of story and script content, has since been complemented with DLC. And the fact that Molyneux himself has now taken over a more wide-reaching role at Microsoft proves just how important the studio has become to the Xbox operation.

Sports Interactive
Sega's London studio doesn't mess about when it comes to yearly updates. While the treadmill of an annual release cycle might bore some, *Football Manager 2009* followed in the footsteps of the '08 edition with an impressive debut in the charts during November – and it's still top of the PC charts six months later as we write this. Sports Interactive managed to fit development of that game in, and launched the online version of the brand, *Football Manager Live*. Damn impressive for a studio of just 50 in-house staff.

Black Rock Studio
The team formerly known as Climax Racing got off to a great start as part of the Disney Interactive Studios group during the last 18 months. It has proven it can devise and launch diverse, attention-grabbing new IP (last year's *Pure* and next year's already hotly-tipped *Split/Second*), making best use of its position as a unique but wholly-owned Disney studio.

EA DICE
Electronic Arts' Swedish team continues to help the wider EA organisation set its agenda in a variety of ways and across all parts of its business. So the traditional market was served by the likes of *Mirror's Edge*, one of the publisher's important new IPs, and also 2008's *Battlefield: Bad Company*. But at the same time, it looked for further online innovations – its Play4Free title *Battlefield Heroes* has hit beta, and a new console-download-only *Battlefield* arrives very soon.

Rockstar North
So after taking home five Develop Awards last year, surely this lot took a year off? Seems not. After once again raising the bar for open world games, the team then applied that to the episodic games model for the release of *The Lost and The Damnded*. The *GTAIV* DLC was more substantial than other disc-based releases and it excelled on numerous levels, featuring new content, characters, voice work, music and even a new art style. The next episode, *The Ballad of Gay Tony*, seems just as inspired.

Rockstar Leeds
While its sister studios are focused on next-gen platforms, Rockstar Leeds continues to innovate on handheld, this year following up its hugely successful PSP *GTA Stories* games with *Chinatown Wars* for DS. The game showed perfect understanding of both the *GTA* franchise and handheld gaming, and proved that the team is packed full of talent.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

DEVELOPMENT LEGEND

BABEL

DEVELOPMENT LEGEND AWARD SPONSOR

This is one of two very special awards for which the winner is not announced until the night itself.

The Development Legend prize can go to any person or individual who has made an impressive impact on games development, be that in a commercial, creative, technological or business sense – or all of those – in their lifetime.

Only after careful consideration by the *Develop* team and soundings from the rest of the industry is the winner chosen.

GRAND PRIX

The other of our two awards with no finalist shortlist, the Grand Prix is bestowed by *Develop* on a UK or European company in recognition of outstanding achievements in game development over the past 12 months and its lifetime.

Like the Development Legend award, the winner is chosen after thoughtful discussion by the *Develop* team and soundings from the rest of the industry.

The decision takes into account both the creative and business elements of the games development sector, including the company or studio's standing, its ability to generate revenues, other commercial successes and critical praise.

HURRY UP!

Now in their seventh year, the Develop Industry Excellence Awards 2009 take place on Wednesday July 15th at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Brighton, alongside the Develop Conference and Expo.

Over 400 industry professionals, representing over 100 different companies, are expected to pack into the venue and the event is due to sell out well in advance.

To ensure that you are there alongside the world's leading studios, technology firms and service companies contact **Jodie.Holdway@bhpr.co.uk** or call +44 (0) 1462 456780 to book your table or seat.

More information can also be found at **www.developmag.com/develop-awards**

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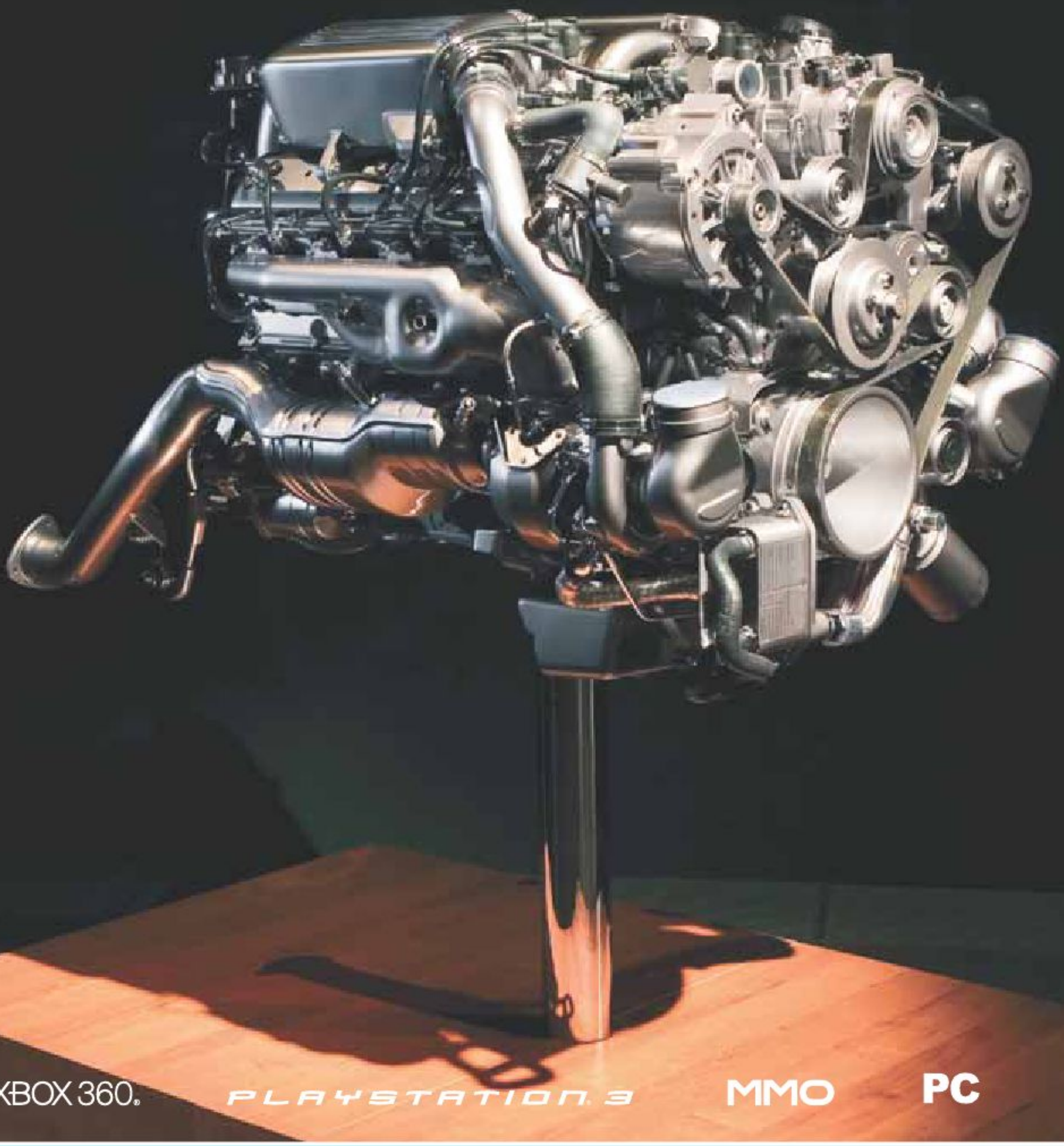

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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

WEDNESDAY JULY 15th

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